

Q&A – Verification of Court/State Ward Status – DRAFT form
Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS)

High School Counselor Financial Aid Workshop
November 14, 2008

The form was presented at the financial aid update workshop. A copy of it is on the Web page at: http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid/0,1607,7-128-38193_38211-110390--,00.html along with the other materials presented at the workshop. **The form can be obtained only from the foster care caseworker, Michigan Department of Human Services.** Guidance counselors and financial aid administrators need to know that the form exists so they can direct the student to obtain a signed form from their caseworker. This form will enable the student to verify their status as an independent student when filing the FAFSA.

Q&A

Are there financial aid programs for families who have adopted high needs or abused children through the state or the Department of Human Services? I have a single parent family who has adopted and cared for five children ages 3 – 15, who were removed from abusive homes.

Contact the adoption services caseworker with the Department of Human Services to find out if such programs exist. Generally, if the children have been adopted, they would be considered dependent when filing the FAFSA. However, DHS might have funds set aside to assist high needs children. The Student Financial Services Bureau does not have funds designated for this purpose.

I have several students who live with friends – noncustodial adults. What is their financial aid status? Is there a quick process for them to legitimize their status as foster youth/emancipated minor? What should they do when applying for financial aid?

Only the biological or adoptive parent's income is required on the FAFSA. If the student is a ward of the court/state, they would need to get the Verification of Court/State Ward Status form signed by their caseworker to support their filing the FAFSA as an independent student. The status of emancipated minor typically does not support filing the FAFSA as an independent student.

If a grandparent has guardianship over their grandchild and provides all financial support is this child a dependent or an independent student?

Again, only the biological or adoptive parental income information is required to complete the FAFSA. Thus, to determine whether the student is dependent or independent depends on the status of the parents. If the parental rights have been

terminated or if the parents are deceased or incarcerated, the student will most likely be determined independent. If the parents are none of the above, even if they are not providing financial support, their income information will be required on the FAFSA. This is a situation to bring to the attention to the financial aid office at the institution where the student plans to enroll. The student will be asked to provide documentation of the parent's status and or degree of involvement in the student's life. Guardianship is not the issue. The issue is whether or not there are biological or adoptive parents that can provide financial/income information.

Is the Youth in Transition Verification of Court/State Ward Status form approved by the Federal Government as adequate documentation to prove independent status?

The form is specific to Michigan and would be used to support the financial aid administrator's professional judgment in special circumstances pertaining to youth in foster care filing the FAFSA. The Federal Government does not get involved in making determinations for special circumstances type cases.

Unaccompanied Youth or Homeless Student

Students who are homeless or an unaccompanied youth can still file the FAFSA. It is very likely they will be asked for documentation to substantiate their situation. Their situation will be viewed as a case for special circumstances. It is imperative that the student speak with a financial aid administrator for assistance with applying for financial aid.

Refer to Step 3, page 7 of the FAFSA 2009 – 2010 for questions pertaining to determining whether or not the student is dependent or independent. It includes questions relative to an unaccompanied youth or homeless youth.

If the student answers "yes" to any of those questions they are indicating a status of independent for the purposes of filing the FAFSA. However, a number of the questions will require documentation and those questions instruct the student to see page three of the FAFSA Notes section. Documentation of their status must be provided to the financial aid office at the institution where they enroll.

Some of the students will be eligible to receive funds from the Education Training Voucher (ETV) program in addition to other state and federal financial aid.

Also, refer to the handout *Foster Youth: tips for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)*. The form can be found with the handouts listed on the Web page of information from the November 14, 2008 High School Counselor Financial Aid Update Workshop.